



MARCH MINUTES FOR D-E NCA ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 2, 2011

3-6:30 p.m.

Delta Performing Arts Center

822 Grand Avenue, Delta, CO

The following members of the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Board attended the March 2 meeting, held at the Delta Performing Arts Center.

Council members attending:

- Terry Kimber of Delta
- Jason Beason of Paonia
- Jan McCracken of Delta
- Steve Acquafresca of Grand Junction
- William (Bill) Harris of Montrose
- Oscar Massey of Whitewater
- Katie Steele of Grand Junction
- Neil "Mike" Wilson of Eckert

Council members absent:

- Tamera Minnick of Grand Junction
- Joe Neuhof of Grand Junction

BLM staff attending:

- Catherine Robertson, GJFO Field Manager
- Andy Windsor, Ben Blom, Brodie Farquhar, D-E NCA team members
- Barbara Sharrow, UFO Field Manager

BLM staff absent:

- Katie Stevens, D-E NCA interim manager

Meeting called into order 3 p.m.

Robertson welcomed Advisory Council members. Presence of a quorum was noted.

Sitting in for Katie Stevens, Robertson welcomed Council members and noted that the D-E NCA Resource Management Plan and EIS will be guided by recommendations from the Council. Overall goal should be helping BLM come up with a set of balanced alternatives to consider, from no change to "do

everything” and alternatives in between. Robertson also urged the Advisory Council to reach out to various user groups. She cautioned user groups that under multiple use, no one ever gets things all their way.

Referring to business items on the agenda, Robertson noted the election of chairperson and vice-chair, as well as the Council’s desire to create subgroups, which could either operate on a programmatic or landscape basis.

Robertson said the agenda called for public comments at 3:15 and 6:00 p.m. She also reminded the Council of the need to set additional meeting dates, notice of which will need to be published in the *Federal Register*.

Public Comment

Kent Sanders: Asked whether the agenda for this meeting was posted online. Was assured it was and given advice on how to find it.

Kent Davis: Asked why Delta County wasn’t represented by a current county commissioner. Jan McCracken was a sitting commissioner until her term ended this year. It was noted that county representatives need not be active county government officials. Robertson pointed out that Bill Harris, representing Montrose County, is also not a county commissioner.

Election of Officers

Mesa County Commissioner Steve Acquafresca nominated **Katie Steele** for the office of chairperson. He said Steele had a strong reputation as an excellent manager. McCracken seconded. Acquafresca moved that Steele be elected by acclamation. Council agreed.

Rancher Oscar Massey nominated **William (Bill) Harris** of Montrose, for the office of vice-chair. McCracken seconded. Massey moved that Harris be elected by acclamation. Council agreed.

Chairperson **Katie Steele** of Grand Junction, is the co-chair of the Colorado Riverfront Commission and has chaired the Robb River Rally event in the Grand Valley. She was selected to represent dispersed recreation and historic resources.

Vice-chairperson **William (Bill) Harris** of Montrose, a past representative of the International Mountain Biking Association and a current board member of the Colorado Plateau Mountain Biking Trail Association. He is also a past president of the Colorado Archaeological Society. He was selected after considering the recommendations of the Montrose County Commissioners. Bill also represents recreation, primarily mountain biking, and cultural resources.

Robertson thanked both Steele and Harris for agreeing to serve as Council officers.

Wild & Scenic River Presentation (PowerPoint)

Andy Windsor, D-E NCA Outdoor Recreation Planner, reviewed the Wild & Scenic River process for the group.

There are three steps in the Wild & Scenic River process:

- Eligibility
- Suitability
- Designation by Congress

By law, **all** rivers and streams are inventoried for eligibility as Wild & Scenic rivers in federal resource management plans. Two criteria are used for Wild & Scenic River eligibility: the river or stream must be “free-flowing” and must have at least one **Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORV)**.

Free flowing means:

Flowing without impoundment

Can have minor diversions,

Can be a seasonal flow

Existence of small diversions does not exclude a segment

Does not have to be boatable

Outstanding Remarkable Values means:

Regional significant scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, historic or other similar features.

Classification: rivers are classified as **wild, scenic, or recreational**.

- **Wild** river areas — watersheds and shorelines, essentially primitive.
- **Scenic** river areas — watersheds and shorelines, largely undeveloped.
- **Recreational** river areas — may have some development

Both the GJFO and UFO have inventoried their rivers and streams. For the rivers and streams in D-E NCA, 11 segments on 7 streams were defined as eligible.

Note: some vegetative ORVs have changed, which affects the above number.

Suitability

Windsor said the suitability issue is complicated, but can be boiled down to three questions:

- Should a stream or stream segment, and its ORVs, be protected or not?
- Is WSR the best tool for protection? Are other tools available?
- Will any other nonfederal agency or relevant private interests (i.e. landowners) support protecting the river?

Recommendation

The decision whether to recommend designation of a study river is made through the RMP.

Where are we now?

The Gunnison Basin stakeholder group is working to develop a recommendation on suitability for the stream segments inside D-E NCA. Their deadline for recommendations is in the month of May.

Discussion

Acquafresca said he and Massey learned a lot about the WSR process as members of the Mesa County stakeholders group, which had 22 meetings. That group did not recommend any stream segments as suitable, but focused more on finding other ways to protect the ORVs.

Sharrow explained how a stakeholder group worked on the suitability of rivers and creeks in the Gunnison River Basin that are outside of the NCA, noting that the group could not reach consensus, but instead filed a majority and minority report. This same group is now working on rivers and creeks within the NCA.

Council member Wilson stated that he has been attending the Gunnison River Basin stakeholder group meetings. He agreed to continue attending stakeholder meetings and report back to the Advisory Council. The Council will also examine whether Joe Neuhoof, who was absent from this meeting, might also be an appropriate liaison to the stakeholder group.

An extensive discussion ensued between Council members, over how to provide the BLM with feedback on alternatives that should be considered in the DENCA planning process. Robertson suggested they could consider approaching the matter by focusing holistically on DENCA's geographic zones, rather than by subject matter, such as vegetation, wildlife, water, geology, archeology, etc. She reasoned that Council members have personal attachments to certain areas of the NCA. By and large, Council members agreed with the zone approach, asking BLM staff to provide the Council with maps and an understanding of what issues are prominent in specific zones.

Steele: Asked Council members to develop areas of expertise and bring that back to the table. Need to learn what the issues are on the ground, to be smart about recommendations.

Consensus emerged that Advisory Council needs to start meeting twice a month, rather than monthly. Members agreed to meet the first and third Wednesday, continuing to alternate between Delta and Grand Junction meeting sites. How soon the second monthly meetings can begin depends on how quickly a notice can be published in the Federal Register.

Robertson and other BLM staff offered to provide maps, reports, data to Advisory Council. Robertson urged Council members to read the RMP reports of McInnis Canyons and Gunnison Gorge NCAs.

Council agreed to focus on Zone 1 (Hunting Grounds/Gunnison Bluffs area between Gunnison River and Hwy. 50) and to add Land Health Assessments to the topics of interest.

Next meeting

3 p.m., April 6, 6th & Rood, Mesa County Courthouse Annex, Training Room A, second floor conference room.